

Tripler (C.S.)

THE
DUTIES OF PHYSICIANS

IN RELATION TO

POPULAR MEDICAL DELUSIONS.

AN ADDRESS
Delivered before the Covington and Newport Medical Society,
June 14, 1859.

BY CHARLES S. TRIPLER, M.D.,
SURGEON UNITED STATES ARMY.

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ADDRESS.

Duties of Physicians in Relation to Popular Medical Delusions.

WE are assembled as a voluntary association of medical men, vested with important rights and privileges—rights and privileges important to ourselves, as members of a profession, second only to that of the Divine in dignity and usefulness, and, in a still greater degree, important to the community in which we live; for upon the manner in which these rights and privileges are exercised depend, in no slight measure, the health and lives of our immediate fellow-citizens.

We have the right to demand of those to whom we render service the reward of our labors; we have the right of excluding from among us the immoral, the ignorant, and the base practitioner; and we have the right and privilege of assembling, from time to time, and freely communicating with each other upon the results of our experience, the various forms of disease we may have witnessed, the information we may have acquired upon matters of the deepest import to our fellow-men, and of considering, and to a certain extent of legislating, upon all matters pertaining to the interests, dignity and usefulness of our profession. But these rights and privileges bring with them corresponding duties. A right without a correlative duty is a moral anomaly, repugnant alike to reason and to justice: no man may avail himself of the one without incurring a coëxtensive obligation to discharge the other.

The first duty of a physician is, plainly, to devote himself to the recovery of such sick persons as may confide themselves to his care. No one is disposed to evade this duty, we fully believe; and it needs no exhortation from me to stimulate those who hear me to increased diligence in this respect. I may ask, however, whether we are as industrious as we might be in the pursuit of more and more attainment in the science we profess; whether we consume the midnight oil in storing our minds with the daily

accumulating facts resulting from the labors of our fellows in all parts of the civilized world ; whether we permit nothing to escape us that may qualify us the better to discharge our duties to our patients, but so make all true knowledge our own, that we can avail ourselves of it promptly and in season whenever the occasion for its application may be presented ? If so, we may indeed congratulate ourselves upon our usefulness, and fairly challenge the respect and veneration of our fellow-men. The importance of a life can not be measured to the family dependent upon the labor of its head, to the community deeply interested in the well being of its members, and, above all, to the soul itself, needing every instant it may dwell in the body to prepare it for eternity. These, all these fearful issues meet us at the door of the sick room : a due sense of them is sufficient to overwhelm the stoutest heart ; and woe be to the man who presumes to encounter them without an honest conviction that he has spared no effort to prepare himself for the strife !

It is, again, the duty of the physician, and especially of medical societies, to instruct the public upon all matters that may promote the general health ; to warn the community against all errors in hygienics that may bring with them, as a consequence, endemic or epidemic diseases ; to suggest such facts bearing upon the prevention of disease, and the preservation of health, as may be within the comprehension of uninstructed minds, and can be *intelligently* applied by the people to their own wants and necessities. Immense public benefits may be conferred by the profession in this way ; and I am happy to think that, in this respect, medical men have, in general, fully come up to their obligations. It is true we can boast of but one Jenner ; but if it were possible to sum up the useful facts contributed by the multitude of the less distinguished and less fortunate, the mass would astonish the world, and every man capable of feeling gratitude for inestimable benefits would acknowledge that he owed the medical profession more than the world's wealth could repay. And I might go on reciting to you duty upon duty that we owe, and, I trust, discharge to our fellow-men, until your patience should be exhausted, and you would desire me to have done with the thrice-told tale ; but there is *one* duty of paramount importance that I can not pass over, and one, too, that I fear we do not discharge as we should : I mean the duty of warning the public, in season and out of season, against that many-headed monster—Modern Quackery.

Every one is ready to denounce it in general, and every one cries "fool" upon his neighbor who is betrayed by its devices ; but few meet the evil in a judicious manner, and use well-directed efforts for its suppression. I fear we are too much in the habit of combatting the pretensions of the empirics with dogmatic denunciation, instead of patient exposition of their absurdities, such as the common mind can comprehend ; that we do not reflect that neither abuse nor contempt is an argument calculated to convince a non-professional man that the claims of this or that false system are destitute of foundation in reason or in fact. People will judge of such matters from such data as are placed before them, whether true or false, and it is our province to see that the charlatan shall not be permitted to mislead those who are within the reach of our influence, because we may conceive it beneath our own dignity to be obliged to prove the falsity of his positions to those who, without the information requisite to enable them to detect the inviting error, are in danger of becoming its victims.

I think it will not be disputed that mankind can know nothing that has not been acquired by their own observation and the comparisons instituted by the reasoning faculties among the facts observed, or what has been communicated to them by Revelation. Everything unknown is a mystery until its causes, nature, etc., are developed ; and however well understood a fact may be by the initiated, to the ignorant of to-day that particular fact remains as much a mystery as it could have been to the builders of Babel. Now, man, from his very nature, is prone to superstition and credulity, and is ready to invest everything he does not understand with some mysterious character ; to believe that the shooting of a star, an unusual light in the heavens, the flight of a bird, the shape or color of a beast, is intended as a warning, an omen of something or other to him, his nation, or his race. The consciousness of an immortal, a spiritual being within us, predisposes us to believe in the possibility, and even probability of other spiritual essences existing about us, and possessing the power of exercising an influence upon us, either malign or benevolent, as the case may be. And it is not until multiplied experience, increased intelligence, and calm, rational investigation have enabled us to understand and explain the nature of the phenomena we witness, in both the moral and the physical worlds, that we are enabled first to divest ourselves of the dread every unusual occurrence was wont to inspire, and afterwards to smile at the credulity of those less

avored than ourselves, who, still groping in ignorance, see war foreshadowed by a comet, pestilence in the falling of a leaf, and death by the ticking of an insect. Hence the superstitions about dreams, and ghosts, and vampires, and witches, that so long held sway in the world, and probably to this day have their dupes. We owe it to the industry of those who have gone before us, the fruits of whose labors we enjoy, that *we* are not as abject slaves to credulity and superstition, and as readily deceived by the crafty and designing as were the mobs who watched with the deepest anxiety the countenances of the Augurs while inspecting the viscera of a calf.

We might adduce a volume of facts to show the truth of the proposition we have advanced—that credulity is the natural condition of man, and that ideas admitted through this weakness become motives, and influence the conduct of the individual; and, further, that no man is exempt from this weakness, except in so far as his acquirements have enabled him to comprehend better what he sees and hears and feels, and thus to exclude false ideas and impressions from his mind.

The history of the Salem witches in 1692 affords an example of the extent to which credulity may be carried. Two little girls and a young woman began to act in an odd manner. “They would creep into holes, and under benches and chairs, put themselves into odd postures, make antic gestures, and utter loud outcries and ridiculous, incoherent and unintelligible expressions. The attention of the family was arrested. No account or explanation of the conduct of the children could be given, and in an evil hour physicians were called in and consulted. One of the physicians gave it as his opinion that the children were bewitched.”* By the benevolent perseverance of friends, the children were persuaded that they *were* bewitched, and at last accused an Indian woman and two decrepid old white women of being the witches. By tortures of mind and body these poor people were made to confess that the charge was true, and that they *were* in league with the devil. “The afflicted, as they were called, did not rest with merely accusing their victims of having bewitched them, but testified on the stand that they had been present with them at their diabolical meetings, had witnessed them partaking, in the visible company of Satan, of his blasphemous sacraments, and had seen

* Upham's Lectures.

them sign his book with their own blood." This delusion was fully as successful as the more recent and equally enlightened one of mesmerism. The facts upon which it was based were, so far as human testimony could be relied upon in such cases, at least as fully established and substantiated as any that have ever been adduced in favor of the latter. The whole community was, with very few exceptions, carried away with it. Even the judges upon the bench and ministers in their pulpits affirmed their belief in it, and, what was of much more consequence, acted upon this belief. Accusations multiplied, and the prisons were filled with the accused. The most absurd facts were given and received as evidence of the agency of the devil in the persons of his confederates. Cotton Mather says of a brother minister, who was among the accused, that "God hath been pleased so to leave this George Burroughs that he had ensnared himself by several instances which he had formerly given of preternatural strength, and which were produced against him." And then he goes on to say that he, though a puny man, could hold at arm's length a gun that two strong men could hardly hold steady with both hands, etc. Respectable witnesses testified that they had suffered under a malignant influence for thirty years, and were tormented by the witches while they were giving their evidence in court.

But the confessions of the accused were still more curious. "Fifty-five persons, many of them previously of the most unquestionable character for intelligence, virtue and piety, acknowledged the truth of the charges that were made against them—confessed that they were witches and had made a compact with the devil. The records of these confessions have been preserved. They relate the particulars that attended the interviews the confessing persons had held with the evil one, declared that they signed his little red book, as they described it, were present at his impious sacraments, and had ridden on sticks through the air, several of them in company, all the way from Andover to Salem, to a diabolical meeting convened there. They specify the exact places where the sacraments of the devil were celebrated. It seems he was accustomed to baptize his converts at Newberry Falls. They were organized, as Dr. Mather observes, much after the manner of a congregational church. He generally appeared to them in the guise of a well-dressed black man, and the usual place in which he convened his assemblies was a wide, open field in Salem village."—*Upham's Lectures.*

When people were accused, there was no hope for them unless they confessed. Proving they were not at a specified place at the time alleged was of no service; the ready explanation was at hand, that if they were not present *bodily*, their imps or familiars were, and conviction was sure to follow. The government appointed a special court to try the accused, and in a few months nineteen people were hanged for the crime of witchcraft. During the recess of the courts the government "consulted several of the ministers of Boston and its vicinity respecting the prosecution; and while they urged caution and circumspection in the methods of examination and the admission of testimony, they at the same time decidedly and earnestly recommended that the proceedings should be vigorously carried on." The accusers revelled in the luxury of blood-shedding, and went so far as to accuse their own ministers, and, eventually, even the wife of Sir William Phipps, the governor, and one of the judges of the court. They might have gone on till the town had been depopulated, if they had not fortunately accused the wife of a minister who had been active in urging on the proceedings against others. But when his own family was invaded he was easily convinced, and found means of convincing others, that the accusers were perjured—and so the delusion ended.

I have thus spoken of the delusion in Salem; but it must not be supposed that it was confined to that town or to this continent. England, Scotland and Germany experienced the same visitation, and in equal force. We perceive that this delusion pervaded the whole community; that it was not confined to the vulgar and illiterate. Even Sir Thomas Browne and Bayle, names immortal in literature and science, entertained the error.

In reflecting upon the nature and the prevalence of this humiliating hallucination, we are lost in amazement. It can be accounted for only upon the principle we are endeavoring to illustrate, erroneous psychological notions, and ignorance of the true nature of the phenomena exhibited. And even this does not completely explain the facts: so that we are led to conclude with Bayle, "*L'esprit est sujet aux maladies epidemiques tout comme le corps; il n'y a qu'à commencer sous des favorables auspices, et lorsque la matiere est bien preparée. La difference qu'il y a entre ces maladies et la peste ou la petite verole, c'est que celles ci sont incomparablement plus frequentes.*"

So late as 1725 to 1735 the belief in Vampirism was extensively

prevalent in Bohemia, Moravia, Silicia, Poland, Hungary, and Wallachia. "There was scarcely a village that was not said to be haunted by one of these blood-sucking demons, and the greater part of the population was a prey to terror. The belief was not confined to the vulgar: all classes participated in it. Military and ecclesiastical commissions were appointed to investigate the facts, and the press teemed with dissertations and narratives from the pens of erudite individuals whose learning was at least equaled by their inveterate credulity."*

And when we go from communities to individuals we still find credulity defacing the intellectual character of the philosopher and the savant. "*Nihil tam absurdum*," says Cicero, "*quod non dictum sit ab aliquo philosophorum*." We find Paracelsus and Van Helmont believing in the possibility of discovering an elixir of life, which should confer immortality upon any one making use of it. The belief in the philosopher's elixir, that should transmute the baser metals into gold, certainly reached down as far as the close of the last century. Mr. Evelyn says, in his Diary, that, "June 4, 1805, he went to see Dr. Dickerson, the famous chemist—that they had a long conversation about the philosopher's elixir, which he believed attainable, and himself had seen it performed by a stranger calling himself Mundamus." He says, further, that when he was in Paris he visited an ingenious enameller, who told him two or three stories of men who had the great arcanum, and who had used it successfully in his presence several times. "*This Antonio asserted with great obstestation, nor know I what to think of it—there are so many imposters and people who love to tell strange stories*," etc.

"In the year 1782, Dr. Price, of Guildford, by means of a red and white powder, proposed to convert mercury into silver and gold; and he is said to have convinced many disbelievers of the possibility of such a change. His experiments were repeated seven times before learned and intelligent persons, who themselves furnished all the materials except the powders, which were to operate the transmutation. These powders were in very small quantity. By whatever means it may have been accomplished, it is certain that gold and silver were produced."* So late as 1805 Peter Woulf was searching for this elixir, and in 1828 a gentleman named Kellerman was similarly occupied in London.

*Sketches of Imposture, etc.

It was a remark of Napoleon that every man had his moment of cowardice, and we may add that every man has his moments of credulity. We are all apt to receive, without due examination, things novel and marvellous—things that strike our fancy and excite in us surprise and admiration. We do not stop to be convinced the things are true, but frequently plunge at once *in medias res*, and puzzle ourselves in trying to account for supposed facts that a few moments' investigation in the right direction would show to be absurdities. "For what stronger pleasure is there with mankind, or what do they earlier learn or longer retain than the love of hearing and relating things strange and incredible? How wonderful a thing is the love of wondering and of raising wonder! 'Tis the delight of children to hear tales they shiver at, and the vice of old age to abound in strange stories of times past. We come into the world wondering at everything; and when our wonder about common things is over, we seek something new to wonder at. Our last scene is to tell wonders of our own to all who will believe them. And amidst all this 'tis well if truth comes off but moderately tainted."—*Shaftsbury*.

An occupation in itself dangerous, and presenting to the ignorant mind objects of sublimity for which it can not account upon rational principles, naturally fosters superstitious habits of thinking, and begets a degree of credulity totally incomprehensible to people educated and living under different circumstances. Hence we find the gallant sailor, ready to meet anything human in any way and at any time, the prey to superstition the most abject and credulity the most absurd. Dreams and ghosts torture his imagination and alarm his spirit, while the Flying Dutchman once seen so paralyzes his arm and appals his heart that he yields unresistingly to the fate his phantom ship foreshadows. Had he known how dreams are engendered, how ghosts may be seen in functional disorders of the organ of vision, how phantom ships may and *must* appear in certain states of the atmosphere, all these phenomena would be suffered to pass unnoticed, or be looked upon as interesting scientific objects. But in his ignorance of all this he can not rise above his omens, and the man who has encountered again and again the storms of ocean in their full fury, suffers himself and his ship to founder in a sea hardly sufficient to swamp a pinnacle.

This proneness to credulity, this readiness to believe things novel, marvellous or mysterious, has always been made use of by

the crafty and designing, with a view to their own profit. This was well understood by the priests and the soothsayers of antiquity, and by their legitimate successors of the present day. I need not recount the tricks and devices they resorted to in order to captivate and enslave the understandings of their fellow-men—their oracles, their omens, their mysteries, and the like. And even since the bright and morning star of Christianity arose, there have seldom been wanting the crafty, the cunning and the fanatic, to lie in wait for and deceive the ignorant and the imaginative. Even in our own day and in our land we have the ecstasies of Joanna Southcote, the impostures of Matthias, the blasphemous revelation of Joe Smith, the antics and absurdities of Miller, and the ludicrous, though disgusting dreams of Swedenborg. All these delusions have had, and still have their dupes; and these are not confined to the blind, the ignorant and the simple, but we see among them the intelligent, the upright, the candid, the sincere. How is this to be accounted for except upon the principles we have advanced—ignorance of the true nature of the subject the mind has undertaken to decide upon, and a too easy credulousness as to things new, marvellous, and, I may add, paradoxical? These imperfections we find pervading society, and walking hand in hand and *pari passu* with the deficiency of information in the minds of the people upon many matters submitted to their judgment, and usually in the ratio of the importance of the matters themselves to the well-being of the race.

Now, we need not be surprised to find medicine the subject of the most erroneous superstitions and prejudices. I hesitate not to say that it is, of necessity, more liable to be misconceived and erroneously judged of by the public mind than any other subject, because it is less understood, and can not be at all comprehended by the mass of men. Facts for the people may be collated and dogmatically enunciated, in any other science, with comparatively little risk; but in medicine a little learning is most emphatically a dangerous thing. How much mischief may be produced by the promiscuous exhibition of a single *infallible* remedy! But still people will have their opinions, and will act upon them in this most abstruse and most difficult of all sciences. And here credulity and the love of the marvellous find their easiest triumphs, and usually in the inverse proportion to the general intelligence of individual men.

The preservation of life and health is, with most men, an object

paramount to all others ; they are ready to grasp at anything that promises to conduce to the one and prolong the other. It is surprising to see how easily men are duped and cheated of their wits in this matter. They are generally shrewd enough in the ordinary affairs of life. They would not trust a dentist to shoe a horse, or a tailor to fill their teeth ; they would not send a barber to select a mill site, or a cobbler to build a railroad ; and yet, let a ruined haberdasher dub himself "doctor," and offer to the public his "life pills," and there is a race among all classes who shall get to the immortality shop quickest ! If a man wishes to build a house, he will apply to an architect for his plans ; he will not go to a milliner, though the latter may fill half the mercenary prints in the country with flaming advertisements of his own skill, and certificates of having built a dome with bonnet whalebones after the failure of all the regular-bred architects in Christendom. Yet will he risk his life and health upon the faith of a boot-black turned pill-monger, and please his fancy with the notion that he is too wise to be done by the "doctors, who always kill more than they cure."

Now, I contend that men have no right to an opinion upon a subject of which they are totally ignorant. And, except in Medicine and Religion, they seldom presume to entertain, or at least to act upon one. The human mind does not differ in original constitution now, from what it was in the year 1. Upon all subjects not investigated by any individual mind, that mind is still a *tabula rasa*. True, the increased intelligence of the age enables men more readily to perceive truth when presented to them in an intelligible shape ; but an ignorant opinion is of no more value now, than it was before the flood. But you all know that it is impossible for the public to form any other than an ignorant opinion upon medical systems and theories ; and, I think, by a little patience and condescension upon the part of physicians, they could convince their friends, that they cannot form a reliable judgment for themselves upon this subject ; and that it is their duty, as well as their interest, to leave the matter where only it can be *safe'y* lodged—in the hands of their medical advisers, men who devote their lives to the legitimate pursuit of medical knowledge.

If ye glance at the medical history of the world, we shall find men always relying upon some wonder-working machinery : at first, from the necessity of the case, as nothing of the true nature

of disease or its cure could have been known. Hence, among the Egyptians, medicine consisted of little more than charms and incantations, as is the case to this day in a great degree among our own savages. The Romans borrowed their system from the Greeks, and mixed it up with their own superstitions, so that it became at last a palpable farce, and at one time all the professors of medicine were banished from the city. Rome was inhabited six hundred years before any physicians established themselves there. In the mean time, their medicine consisted of charms, fascinations, incantations and amulets; for instance, Cato de Re Rustica proposes for a fracture to have it bound up and these words to be sung over it every day: "*Huat, Hanat, ista, pista, dominabo, damnastra et luxata.*"* He was the prototype of the natural bonesetter of our own times. We find this highly civilized people consulting the Sybilline books for the means of arresting a pestilence. Atticus, in the fifth century, a follower and commentator on the works of Galen, expressly recommends the use of magical arts and incantations, from, apparently, a firm belief in their physical efficacy.

Among the Arabians, Avicenna, in the tenth century, a most learned and industrious man, versed in all the philosophy of the Stagyrte and in all the mathematical and physical science then known, as well as the most famous physician of his time, believed himself under the influence of supernatural revelation. And, in fact, until anatomy began to be studied and to form a necessary part of medical education, we can only look upon even legitimate medicine as a tissue of guesses, caprices and uncertainties. Observation had done something toward systematizing facts, and symptoms were well recorded, so that a sort of empirical knowledge was obtained, in a considerable degree useful; still, nothing could be said to be established in the science until anatomy was made the foundation for the superstructure. From the twelfth to the fifteenth century, "what remained, either of literature or science, was in possession of the monks, who were themselves grossly ignorant, and whose interest it was to preserve mankind in the same state of ignorance. The exercise of the medical profession was principally in their hands, and they still adhered for the most part to the doctrines and practice of Galen; but with these they mixed up a large portion of superstition, and had, not

*Sketches of Imposture.

unfrequently, recourse to magic and astrology. By these means they obtained an unbounded influence over the minds of the people, and operated so powerfully on the imaginations of their patients, as in many cases to give an apparent sanction to their confident assumption of supernatural agency."* Within the last three hundred years, and even later, we find "the most loathsome preparations recommended, and eagerly used by the sick. Mummy had the honor to be worn in the bosom next the heart by kings and princes, and all who could bear the price. It was pretended that it was able to preserve the wearer from the most deadly infections, and that the heart was secured by it from the invasion of all malignity. A drachm of the preparation called *Treacle of Mummy*, taken in the morning, prevented the danger of poison for all that day. Thus decayed spices and gums, with the dead body of an Egyptian, were thought to give long life! To cure a quartan or the gout, take the hair and nails, cut them small, mix them with wax and stick them to a live crab, casting it into the river again. The moss from a dead man's skull was held to be of sovereign virtue in some cases." An approved spell for sore eyes was worn as a jewel about many necks; it was written on paper and enclosed in silk, never failing to do good, when all other helps were helpless. No sight might dare to read it; but at length a curious mind, while the patient slept, by stealth ripped open the mystical cover and found in Latin, *Diabolus effodiat tibi oculos impleat foramina stercoreibus.*"†

Such is the humiliating spectacle of the human mind, as regards its power of discriminating betwixt truth and error in medicine: credulity the most surprising, the love of novelty, of paradox, of the marvellous, taking *omne ignotum pro magnifico*, believing readily they know not what, they know not why, and risking without a rational thought health and life itself upon the mendacious promises of notorious impostors! Here then is an inviting field for the operations of the enterprising. *Si mundus vult decipi decipiatur*, say they, and we have them by scores fooling the simple to the top of their bent, of all sorts and descriptions, and of every intermediate degree from the hocus-pocus of Mesmer to the transcendental nonsense of Hahnemann. We can scarcely take up a newspaper that we do not find it half filled with the advertisements of these vampyres. Every one claims his own to be an

* Bostock's History of Medicine.

† Sketches of Imposture.

infallible remedy for a score of diseases totally dissimilar in pathology, and all certified to as having been cured by this Catholicon after all other Catholicons and Panaceas had failed. And these certificates are signed by men calling themselves "ministers," and "pastors," and "judges," and sometimes even "doctors;" and men believe this nonsense, and swallow the leperous distilments, and die. A sensible man in his cool moments can hardly believe the world contains such dupes; but the palaces of the quacks—humiliating monuments of the imbecility of man, too surely attest this truth. All that is necessary for the success of a nostrum or a new system is, that it should be paradoxical, unintelligible, point out the inefficacy of everything of a similar nature that has preceded it, and promise that the grand secret is now discovered that is to consign the undertaker to a museum of antiquities.

Thus we find Chrysippus, in the time of the Asclepiadæ, with his innovations startling the world, rejecting bleeding, and discountenancing all active purgatives. Then Asclepiades of Bythynia, about an hundred years A. C., an unsuccessful teacher of rhetoric at Rome, taking up "doctoring" as a trade and preying upon the weaknesses of his fellow-men. "He began," says Bostock, "upon the plan which is so generally found successful by those who are conscious of their own ignorance, of villifying the principles and practice of his predecessors, and of asserting that he had discovered a more compendious and effective mode of treating diseases, than had before been known to the world. As he was ignorant of anatomy and pathology, he decried the labors of those who sought to investigate the structure of the body or to watch the phenomena of disease; and he is said to have directed his attacks more particularly against the writings of Hippocrates. It appears, however, that he had the discretion to refrain from the use of very active and powerful remedies, and to trust principally to the efficacy of diet, exercise, bathing and other circumstances of this nature." Here we have the germ of Homœopathy.

Next we have Thessalus, a man of mean birth and acquirements, but following the usual course, endeavoring to bring contempt upon his predecessors, to expose their errors and the like, and claiming to have discovered a new system that was to supersede all further attempts of the kind. He assumed the modest title of "conqueror of physicians."

We pass now to Philip Aureolus Theophrastus Paracelsus Bombastes, of Hohenheim, Prince of Physicians, Philosopher of

Fire, the Trismagistrus of Switzerland, Reformer of Alchemical Philosophy, Nature's faithful Secretary, Master of the Elixir of Life and Philosopher's Stone, Great Monarch of Chemical Secrets. He, too, "proclaimed all antecedent medical science and experience a tissue of errors, in which the human mind had ever groped until dissipated by *his* wonderful discoveries. Such was his dogmatical zeal, that he caused a collection of the writings of Hippocrates, Galen, Celsus, and all preceding works on medicine, and formally committed them to the flames before his admiring class of pupils, while seated in pomp in his professorial chair." *

Paracelsus compounded an elixir of life, which he carried about with him, which he boldly proclaimed would insure his own material immortality, or that of any one else who should make use of it; and yet he was found dead from intemperance, with a bottle of his elixir in his pocket, at the early age of but forty or forty-five years!

Burton, in his *Anatomy of Melancholy*, thus records some of his notions: "'Tis a common practice of some men to go first to a witch and then to a physician—if one cannot cure, the other shall.

"*Flectere si nequeant Superos, Acheronta movebunt.*"

It matters not, says Paracelsus, whether it be God or the devil, angels or unclean spirits, cure him, so he be cured. If a man fall into a ditch (as he prosecutes it), what matter is it whether a friend or an enemy help him out?—and if I be troubled with such a malady, what care I whether the devil himself or any of his ministers, by God's permission, redeem me? He calls a magician God's minister and vicar, applying that of *bos estis Dei* profanely to them; and elsewhere he encourageth his patients to have a good faith, a strong imagination, and they shall find the effects, let divines say to the contrary what they will. He proves and contends that many diseases can not otherwise be cured: *incautione orti; incantatione curari debent.*" Here we have authority for the Salem witchcraft, and a most unkind anticipation of *similia similibus* humbug. If we were believers in metempsychosis, we could not fail to recognize the empiric of Padua in the more modern empiric of Leipsic.

The death of Paracelsus soon caused his absurdities to be forgotten; but the chemical sect of which he was the type flourished for many years, even as late as the 17th century. A deal

* Bostock.

of mysticism and superstition deformed all that was useful in it, and even the most learned men of the times could not so far throw off the influence of the spirit of the age as to dissent from or oppose these practices. Astrology and magic were generally used by physicians, and were considered necessary to the efficacy of the remedies they prescribed; and so we find it still: if a new and successful (I mean in a money-making sense) form of empiricism is broached, it will influence the practice of medicine, even with many of those members of the profession who are perfectly well persuaded of the preposterous absurdity of the system.

The next system of quackery (I can call it by no other name) which I shall notice, is that of the celebrated Brown, of Edinburgh. It is more than probable that this enthusiast first promulgated his peculiar doctrines more from hostility to Cullen than from any conviction of their truth. But however this may be, like most innovators, he chose to discard all facts and experience, and to maintain that all diseases were due to one of two conditions—direct or indirect debility; while the treatment, as Bostock remarks, “was solely directed to the general means for increasing or diminishing the excitement, without any regard to specific symptoms, or any consideration but that of degree, or any measure but that of quantity.” Here was a royal road at once opened to the acquisition of a profession, and of course the indolent, as well as the poetical, were ready to embrace it: no study, no experience, no education was at all necessary. The blacksmith might leave his forge or the cobbler his stall, and announce himself a “doctor” betwixt two days. What was he to do? Why, use his lancet, and, if that did not relieve his patient, give him brandy *ad libitum*; or, invert the process, if it suited his inclination better, and he could not go wrong. He was an accomplished Brunonian in an hour, and the regular practitioner was, as now, a dolt, an ass, who could not shake off the rusty shackles of antiquity.

The notions of Brown spread as rapidly as the modern delusions of Homœopathy, and by the same means: the accomplished and scientific physician of his own land rejected, but the obscure, stupid, ignorant and lazy found in them a means of bettering their fortunes, and of course adopted them. On the continent, and particularly in Italy, they found many advocates. The public was appealed to, its vanity flattered, its love of the marvellous catered for, and of course the Brunonians were declared right.

How lucid the system!—how beautifully simple!—how strictly in accordance with the laws of nature!—there are, there can be but two sorts of disease. It is manifest that a sick man is either too weak or too strong. He can be in no other condition. His position must be within these limits, and his whereabouts a question of degree only. It is, of course, opposed by the old school, because, if established, their occupation's gone. The treatment of disease is henceforth a very simple matter.

Unfortunately for the simplicity of nature, the simplicity of the Brunonians was greater, or, if I may use a Homœopathic term, *more intense*, and upon the principle of *similia similibus*: the former was superceded, Bruno died a victim to his own delusion, and his *system* was forgotten. The world, however, was not yet ready to exclaim *jam satis*, and new experiments, fully as wise and fully as successful, continued to be made upon its credulity. New systems and new devices were always at hand. The supply was always equal to the demand.

Our own age, prolific beyond all that have preceded it in these iniquitous devices, has contributed, and is contributing its full quota to the grand treasury of medical delusions. Not to mention the sarsaparillas, and catholicons, and panaceas that everywhere abound (their name is legion), we have before us the two stupendous frauds of Hydropathy and Homœopathy.

The moral characteristics of the age differ in no respect from those that have gone before. Now, as then, "on all topics, either historical, scientific or literary, mankind possesses a strong avidity for the marvellous. From the constitution of the human mind, the love of novelty is one great principle by which the attention is excited and the intellectual powers are called into action. Hence in a rude state of society nearly the whole art of medicine consists in the dexterous employment of this agent, and it is still found the most effectual method of attracting the notice of the multitude who are incapable of close reasoning or calm investigation."* So Burton hath it: "Now for physicians there are, in every village, so many mountebanks, empirics, quack-salvers, Paracelsians (as they call themselves"—Homœopaths they call themselves now) "*causifici et sanicidæ*, so Clenard calls them, wizards, alchemists, poor vicars, cast apothecaries, physicians' men, barbers, and good wives, professing great skill, that

* Bostock, op. cit.

I make great doubt how they shall be maintained, or who shall be their patients. Besides, there are so many of both sorts, and some of them such harpers, so covetous, so clamorous, so imprudent and (as he said) litigious idiots, that they can not well tell how to live by one another; but, as he jested in the comedy of clocks, they were so many, they are almost starved, a great part of them, and ready to devour their fellows, *et noxia calliditate se correpere*; such a multitude of pettifoggers and empirics, such impostors, that an honest man knows not in what sort to compose or behave himself in so vile a rout," etc.

With regard to Hydropathy I shall not detain you with many remarks, as it has made no progress of any consequence in this country. The result of the few experiments that have been made has not been such as to invite many to try its virtues. We seldom see it alluded to any more in the public prints, except under the obituary head, where occasionally a death from the *water cure* is recorded. I shall merely say that this, like almost, if not quite all the other medical delusions that disgrace the nineteenth century, is merely a resuscitation of an exploded error. Cardan, who lived in the beginning of the sixteenth century, professed to cure all diseases with water alone. His name has been forgotten, but his system has been revived by Pressnitz, and has succeeded in deceiving many.

But another system of medicine, termed by its contriver Homœopathy, has made greater progress among us. As I conceive it to be infinitely more dangerous than the former, and fraught with more disastrous consequences to any society that will tolerate it, I shall count upon your indulgence in proceeding to speak of it somewhat more at length.

In entering upon this subject I can not do better than to quote a remark of Hahnemann himself, and then endeavor to prove that he has not only enunciated a wholesome truth, but, *in his own system*, has given this truth an irresistible demonstration.

"Innumerable opinions," says he, "on the nature and cure of diseases have successfully been promulged—each distinguishing his own *theory* with the title of *system*, though directly at variance with every other and inconsistent with itself. Each of these refined productions dazzled the reader at first with its unintelligible display of wisdom, and attracted to the system-builder crowds of adherents echoing his unnatural sophistry, but from which none of them could devise any improvement in the

art of healing, until a new system, frequently in direct opposition to the former, appeared supplanting it, and for a season acquiring celebrity ; yet none were in harmony with nature and experience—*mere theories*, spun of a refined imagination, from apparent consequences, which, on account of their subtlety and contradictions, were practically inapplicable at the bedside of the patient, and only fitted for idle disputation.”

In this quotation from the first page of *Hahnemann's Organon*, as translated by C. Hering, we find it remarked—first, that innumerable opinions, termed *systems* of medicine by their inventors, have been promulgated. This is a historical truth, needing no demonstration. We have briefly referred to some of them in our preceding remarks, and we might add to the list the systems of the chemists, of the mathematicians, of the humoralists, of Cullen, of Broussais, and many others. Most of these systems, however, contained important truths, and did, in effect, advance the science of medicine. They were the productions of gifted minds, of indefatigable industry and research, and of an honest employment of all that was known in medicine at the time they were promulgated ; they were candidly believed by their authors to have been educed from and confirmed by the observation and experience of the mass of the profession. They were not the closet productions of some eager speculator, in whom conceit superseded judgment, vanity learning, and egotism research. And being what they were, they have left their impress upon the science, and the authors have been assigned their appropriate place among the benefactors of mankind.

Not so, however, with some others—such as those of Chrysippus, of Thessalus, of Paracelsus, of Pressnitz, and of Hahnemann. These, like all quacks, in and out of the profession, begin their systems by discarding all that has been acquired by centuries of labor, and through the instrumentality of such minds as Hippocrates, Galen, Avicenna, Stahl, Van Helmont, Boerhaave, Cullen, Sydenham, John Hunter, Bichat, and a host of others. They enter their closets, shut themselves up for a few months, and then with immeasurable impudence and presumption, set forth to an admiring world that all their predecessors have been wrong, that *their* genius has discovered the only true method of curing diseases, that “they are the men, and wisdom will die with them.” Forth from their teeming brains, after a few days' incubation, springs, like Minerva from the head of Jupiter, a complete “system” of

medicine, that is at once to banish "death from the world and all our woe." Thus, as we have seen, was the elixir of life of Paracelsus ushered into the world. Thus was Chronothermalism (a term perfectly cabalistic to the million, but for that reason the more attractive)—thus, I say, was Chronothermalism announced a few years ago. Thus are we told Dr. S. P. Townsend, though young, discovered "those extraordinary and rare properties invested in sarsaparilla," and that he "has saved within the limits of the city of New York above fifty thousand human beings, who, but for his discovery and application, would now have been tenants of the tomb," the said *wonderful discovery* being that, if he made a fire under a kettle containing sarsaparilla and water, in due time the kettle would boil and the result would be a decoction of sarsaparilla! And in like manner we are told that Samuel Hahnemann, "on *commencing* the study of medicine, soon became disgusted with the mass of contradictory assertions and theories that then existed. He found everything in that department obscure, hypothetical and vague, and resolved to abandon the medical profession." So, to mend the matter, he engendered another mass of contradictory assertions and theories, still more obscure, hypothetical and vague than those of any of his precursors. Thus it appears that "whilst engaged in translating the *materia medica* of the illustrious Cullen in 1790, in which the febrifuge virtues of Cinchona bark are described, he became *fred* with the desire of ascertaining its mode of action; whilst in the enjoyment of the most robust health, he commenced the use of this substance, and in a short time was attacked with *all* the symptoms of intermittent fever, similar in *every* respect to those which that medicine is known to cure. Being struck with the *identity* of the two diseases, he *immediately divined* the great truth, which has become the foundation of the new medical doctrine of Homœopathy."—*Hering's Hahnemann's Organon*.

Now I have known many a man "in the most robust health" to be attacked with intermittent fever without having resorted to the use of bark to induce it. I have even been in that predicament myself, and have no desire to dispute the fact, that the "Illustrious" may have been similarly affected even while taking bark. But that the drug itself had the slightest agency in producing this effect, I emphatically deny, and adduce the universal experience of the world, outside the ranks of this delusion, in support of my assertion; and I challenge all the empirics in Christendom,

of whatever sect, to produce *one* such instance from the writings of medical men from the year 1640, when bark was first discovered, to the present day. One swallow does not make a summer, nor can one or a dozen cases establish the efficacy or impotency or the *modus operandi* of a medicine. The uncertainty of medical experience has always been a fruitful source of error and disappointment. "There are certain peculiarities," says Bostock, "necessarily connected with the subject, which render it extremely difficult to appreciate the value of experiment and observation. In our experiments we are seldom able to ascertain with accuracy the previous state of the body on which we operate, and in our own observations we are seldom able to ascertain what is the exact cause of the effect which we witness. The history of medicine, in all its parts, and especially that of the *materia medica*, affords ample testimony to the truth of these remarks. In modern times and more remarkably in Great Britain, no one thinks of proposing a new mode of practice without supporting it by the results of practical experience. The disease exists, the remedy is prescribed, and the disease is removed; we have no reason to doubt the veracity or the ability of the narrator; his favorable report induces his cotemporaries to pursue the same means of cure, the same favorable result is obtained; and it appears impossible for any fact to be supported by more decisive testimony. Yet in the space of a few short years the boasted remedy has lost its virtue, the disease no longer yields to its power, while its place is supplied by some new remedy, which, like its predecessors, runs through the same career of expectation, success and disappointment." And so Boyle remarks—"Indeed, in physic it is much more difficult than most men can imagine, to make an accurate experiment; for oftentimes the same disease, proceeding in several persons from quite different causes, will be increased in one by the same remedy by which it has been cured in another. And not only the constitutions of patients may as much alter the effects of remedies, as the causes of diseases, but even in the same patient and the same disease the single circumstance of time may have almost as great an operation upon the success of a medicine, as either of the former particulars."

Here we see, from men of able and reflecting minds, how difficult it is to establish any point in medicine. Unless we can be sure of all the circumstances of a case, a multitude of experiments, made under all conceivable conditions and by many differ-

ent experimenters, will be necessary to establish the relation of cause and effect. If we could be sure of all the influences at work to disturb or modify the action of a medicine, one case would determine its effect as well as a thousand. But it is evident that, in the present state of our knowledge, this degree of certainty is unattainable. Any one may comprehend this, whether physician or not. Every mother or nurse has found herself occasionally disappointed in the effect of some domestic remedy she has been in the habit of using. Common sense and daily observation teach her that identity of cause will and must produce identity of effect. Why, then, was not her remedy as effectual in one case as in another? Because there were modifying influences, disturbing forces in the way that she had not observed, and that perhaps neither she nor her physician could have observed. These things occur every day, and are notorious. Yet, in the face of this universal experience of the extreme difficulty of ascertaining the true effect of remedial agents, we are gravely told that the "illustrious Hahnemann," from the accident of his being attacked with fever and ague while taking bark, *immediately* divined the great *truth* that forms the foundation of his system. Can any one believe this?

His eulogist goes on: "Not content with one experiment, he tried the virtues of medicine on his own person, and on that of others. In his investigations he arrived at this conclusion: that the substance employed possessed an inherent power of exciting in healthy subjects the same symptoms which it is said to cure in the sick." From this conclusion he went on to develop and embody his system; and in his *Organon* we have the principles, the *institutes* of Homœopathy.

We will now quote a few aphorisms from this work, and then, by comparing them with what we have quoted above of his investigations, we shall endeavor to show that they fail to sustain the fundamental principle of his system, *similia similibus*, and therefore the system "is inconsistent with itself, inapplicable from subtlety and contradictions, and only fitted for idle disputations."

"From this incontrovertible truth, that beyond the *totality* of the *symptoms* there is nothing discernible in diseases by which they could make known the nature of the medicines they stand in need of, we ought naturally to conclude there can be *no other indication* whatever than the ensemble of the symptoms, in each individual

case, to guide us in the choice of a remedy. . . . As diseases are nothing more than changes in the general state of the human economy which declare themselves by symptoms, etc. . . . Plain experience, an infallible oracle in the art of healing, proves to us, in every careful experiment, that the particular medicine whose action upon persons in health produces the greatest number of symptoms *resembling* those of the disease which it is intended to cure, possesses also in reality (when administered in convenient doses) the power of suppressing, in a radical, prompt and permanent manner, the totality of the morbid symptoms—that is to say, the whole of the existing disease ; it also teaches us that all medicines cure the diseases whose symptoms approach nearest to their own, and that among the latter none admit of exception. . . . This phenomenon is founded in the natural law of Homœopathy, a law unknown until the present time, although it has on all occasions formed the basis of every visible cure—that is to say, a dynamic disease in the living economy of man, is extinguished in a permanent manner by another that is more powerful, when the latter (*without being of the same species*) bears a strong resemblance to it in its mode of manifesting itself: . . . The physician has nothing more to do than destroy the totality of the symptoms, in order to effect a simultaneous removal of the internal change—that is, to annihilate the disease itself.”

Divested of their “subtlety and unintelligible display of wisdom,” these remarks express the following propositions, viz.: 1st. That diseases are known only by their symptoms—a self-evident truth ; 2d. That the *totality* of the symptoms constitutes the disease ; and this *totality* is all the physician has to cure ; 3d. That the only method of curing a disease is to induce *another* more powerful, *not* of the *same* species, but bearing a *strong resemblance* to it in its mode of manifesting itself—that is, in its symptoms. This is tersely expressed by the words “*similia similibus curanter*.”

Now, I wish these propositions to be borne in mind, while we recur to our first quotations relative to the means by which Hahnemann *divined* his great truth. It is there stated that while in health he took bark, and it produced “*all*” the “*totality*” of the symptoms of intermittent fever—that he was struck with the *identity*, not similarity, of the two diseases. In the progress of his experiments he found that remedies produced the *same* symptoms they are said to cure in the sick. If, then, he had *all*

the symptoms of intermittent, he had intermittent by his own showing, and as is evident to any one of common sense. But *identity* is not similarity—diseases being known by their symptoms, or, as Hahnemann expresses it (though falsely), consisting in *nothing* but their *symptoms*, *sameness* of symptoms necessarily implies *sameness* of disease, and not similarity. It follows, then, that Hahnemann's own experiments prove, not that *similia similibus curanter*, but, if there be any cure at all, it is *ipsis-sima ipsissimis curantur*. There is no possible escape from this conclusion, and it is rigidly proven that this system is "inconsistent with itself," necessarily "inapplicable in the cure of disease," and the cabalistic term Homœopathy intended "to dazzle by its unintelligible display of wisdom," expresses neither any scientific truth, nor the true nature of the absurdity it was employed to characterize.

We have before contended that Hahnemann's fundamental experiment was false in fact, and we have now proven his system false in logic, and, we think, in a way that may be comprehended by any one in or out of the profession.

By adducing a few of the beauties of the system the "illustrious" divined, or (as it is reverently expressed in the *Journal of Homœopathy*, formerly published in Detroit, but which has for some years been missing, *hiatus valde deflendus*) which was revealed to him, we shall bring this paper to a close.

It is now claimed that this system was *revealed* to Hahnemann. I quote from the *Michigan Journal of Homœopathy*, vol. i., No. 12, page 142: "Those who, following the laws of nature, as written by the finger of God upon the physical creation, are calling upon their suffering fellow-creatures to look [*smell*, the illustrious would have written] and live; men who, imbued with the truth, as *revealed to the immortal Hahnemann*, are pointing to a balm in Gilead, to a fountain whose waters refresh, invigorate and restore."

Now let us glance a moment at the nature of this new "revelation," and compare it with another "revelation" that has been exerting some influence occasionally upon the minds of a few people of exalted ideality.

"But the essence of diseases and their cure will not bend to our fancies and convenience; diseases will not, out of deference to our stupidity, *cease to be dynamic aberrations*, which our *spiritual*

existence undergoes in its mode of feeling and acting—that is to say, *immaterial changes in the state of health.*”*

I now quote from *Pond's Review of Swedenborgianism*: “The obvious sense of Scripture, that which strikes the eye and affects the heart of the common reader, is, in comparison, of small account, while the utmost importance is attached to certain hidden, spiritual, mystical senses, which, so far as the uninitiated are concerned, seem almost entirely arbitrary. Thus, we are told, that by a garden, a grove and a wood are meant the good and truth of the church, under the different characters of celestial, spiritual, rational, natural and sensual”—and much more of the same sort; so that a dictionary of correspondences was required, all of which was *revealed* to Swedenborg, of course. Again: “The *emerods* are symbols of the appetites of the natural man, which, when separated from the spiritual affections, are unclean. The mice, by which the land was devastated, are images of the lust of destroying, by false interpretation, the spiritual nourishment which the church derives from the word of God.” In the infallibility of his inspiration, Swedenborg rejects a large number of the books of the Old Testament, and all the New, except the Gospels and the Apocalypse, as being the works of man and not inspired. Swedenborg, however, was not sufficiently spiritualized, though he had been in both heaven and hell, where he claims to have seen some odd sights; but one of his followers, a Mr. Tulk, according to Mr. Pond, “affirms that the language of Swedenborg needs to be spiritualized, else,” he says, “we shall be compelled to receive greater mysteries in the New Church than those from which we have escaped in the Old.” We honor the frankness of this Mr. Tulk; at the same time we are anxious to know where this labor of spiritualizing is to end. Swedenborg spiritualizes the Scriptures, and Mr. Tulk spiritualizes Swedenborg; and the next improvement will be to spiritualize him.”

Here we have a noble pair of brothers: the one “spiritualizing” all religion, all revelation, and all common sense, as received, understood and believed from the beginning of the world, and rejecting all Scripture that does not suit his crazy fantasy; the other “spiritualizing all diseases, declaring them affections of the *spiritual* man, *immaterial changes in the state of health*, and rejecting at once all the writings and recorded expe-

* *Organon*, p. 19.

rience of the master minds in medicine from the earliest ages to the present day. The analogies between the two dreams are so striking that we can not but consider them part and parcel of each other. The mind that receives the one can not, to be consistent with itself, reject the other. This analogy we commend especially to the attention of those "ministers" and "pastors" who "creep into houses, leading captive silly women," and, with the forwardness of ignorant conceit, strive to propagate a medical imposture as ruinous to the body as the Swedenborgian hallucination can be to the soul. We are not alone in recognizing the intimate connection between these two novelties. In Detroit, during the summer of 1849, we were frequently edified with communications in the daily prints, claiming and establishing this relationship beyond all controversy. Had Swedenborg and Hahnemann been cotemporaries, we should have supposed the two schemes to have been contrived in concert; but as the latter flourished a century later than the former, we are constrained to look upon him as having "stolen the thunder" of his "illustrious predecessor."

From page 122 of Hering's translation of *Hahnemann's Organon* I quote the following: "But a chronic miasm, that is incomparably greater and far more important than either of the two last named, is that of 'psora.' . . . It is not until the whole organism is infected that psora declares its huge internal chronic miasm, by a cutaneous eruption (sometimes consisting only in a few pimples) that is wholly peculiar to it, accompanied by insupportable tickling, voluptuous itching, and a specific odor. This psora is the *sole, true and fundamental* cause that produces *all* the other countless forms of disease, which, under the names of nervous debility, hysteria, hemicrania, hypochondriasis, insanity, melancholy, idiocy, madness, epilepsy and spasms of all kinds, softening of the bones, or rickets, scoliosis and cyphosis, caries, cancers, fungus hæmatodes, jaundice and cyanosis, dropsy, amenorrhœa, gastrorrhagia, epistaxis, hæmoptysis, hæmaturia, metrorrhagia, asthma, and phthisis ulcerosa, impotency and sterility, deafness, cataract and amaurosis, paralysis, loss of sense, pains of every kind, etc., appear in our pathology as so many peculiar and independent diseases." In this heterogeneous jumble of terms—

"Words to the witches in Macbeth unknown"—

there are several diseases enumerated that are rather frequently

met with: some of them are peculiar to females, others common to both sexes. Now, if one of our industrious gossips, an admirer of Homœopathy and little pills, should unfortunately become the subject of one of these, she would perhaps be equally gratified and enlightened to know that the cause of it was that "ancient miasm," psora. But suppose she were told, in plain English, without any "dazzling, unintelligible display of wisdom," that she had the "itch," what would she say to that? Yet, if Homœopathy be true, that is true; nay, more, this "itch" is not a disease of her material body, but a "dynamic aberration" which her "*spiritual* existence" has undergone. In other words, her spirit has the itch, and should the disease prove fatal, her spirit must continue to have it, unless in the spiritual world she can find a Homœopathic physician who will indulge her with the smell of a globule of brimstone once in a while, till it is cured.

Ludicrous, absurd and disgusting as all this is, I have said nothing on the subject that I have not taken fairly from *Hering's Hahnemann's Organon*. I have already quoted Hahnemann's language as to diseases being spiritual and not material affections, and that all the diseases I have enumerated are caused by the "itch." I shall now quote passages to show that Hahnemann asserts positively, that diseases can be cured *only* by *Homœopathy*—that sulphur is a specific for the itch—and that smelling a globule does as much good as swallowing it, and is not to be repeated oftener.

1. That diseases can be cured only Homœopathically—*Organon*, p. 88, ¶ 23, 24: "From pure experience and the most careful experiments that have been tried we learn, that the existing morbid symptoms, far from being effaced or destroyed by contrary medicinal symptoms like those excited by the antipathic, enantipathic, or palliative methods, they, on the contrary, reappear more intense than ever after having for a short space of time undergone apparent amendment. There remains accordingly no other mode of applying medicines profitably in diseases than the Homœopathic," etc.

2. That sulphur is a specific for the "itch"—p. 7, preface of the British edition prefixed to Hering's translation of the *Organon*, it is asserted, "Sulphur is a specific against the itch." From p. 189, same work, I quote: "It is found (to continue the example of sulphur) that in psoric diseases seldom less than four, often six or eight or even ten such doses (tincture sulphur X°) are

requisite for the complete destruction of that portion of the chronic disease, which sulphur is capable of removing, to be administered in the aforesaid intervals" (every seven days,) "provided there has been no previous allopathic abuse of that medicine. Thus a (primary) psoric eruption of recent origin, in a person not too much weakened, even when it may have extended over the whole body, can be thoroughly cured by a dose of sulphur repeated every seven days, within the space of ten to twelve weeks (with ten to twelve such globules,) so that it is rarely necessary as an additional remedy to administer a few doses of carb. veg. X^o" (common charcoal,) "in like manner given every week without any external treatment whatever, except a frequent change of linen and appropriate regimen."

3. That smelling a globule does as much good as swallowing it and is not to be repeated oftener. Same quotation proceeds—"But the vital power offers the most resistance to the operation of sulphur, however plainly it may be indicated, when the remedy has been previously abused (even years before) in large doses. Here an aggravation of the chronic disease is conspicuous upon exhibiting the smallest dose of the remedy, even after smelling a globule moistened with tincture sulphur X^o. This deplorable condition, which renders almost impossible the best medical treatment of chronic disease, is one among the many which would lead us to bemoan the very general deterioration of chronic diseases, caused by the malpractice of the old school, were we not in possession of a remedy."

"In such cases, let the patient once strongly *smell* a globule as large as a mustard seed moistened with hydrarg. mit. X^o, which is to be allowed to operate about nine days, in order to render the vital power again disposed for the beneficial operation of sulphur upon it (at least by the smelling of tincture sulphur X^o)—a discovery for which we are indebted to Dr. Griesselich of Karlsruhe," p. 191, same work—"In those cases wherein a particular remedy is strongly indicated, but the patient is very weak and irritable, *once smelling* a globule of the size of a mustard seed moistened with the medicine, is safer and *more serviceable* than when it is taken in substance even in the minutest dose of the higher dilutions. In the process of smelling, the patient should hold the phial containing the globule under one nostril, when one momentary inhalation of the air in the phial is to be made, and if the dose is intended to be stronger, the same operation may be repeated

with the other nostril. The operation of the medicine thus administered continues as long as when it is taken in substance, and, therefore, the smelling must not be repeated at shorter intervals than when taken in the latter mode."

I shall now give you a couple of specimens of Homœopathic wisdom that never *could* have been suggested to the human mind by any agency short of inspiration.

The *Organon*, p. 192, ¶ 250, enjoins—"When, in urgent cases after the lapse of six, eight or twelve hours, it becomes manifest to the observant physician, who has accurately investigated the character of the disease, that he has made a false selection of the remedy last administered, when during the appearance of new symptoms the disease becomes, though slightly, yet evidently, worse from hour to hour, it is not only *admissible*, but duty renders it imperative on him to *rectify the mistake* he has made, and administer another Homœopathic remedy, not only *tolerably*, but the *best possibly* adapted to the morbid condition at the time."

¶ 252, p. 193, same work, informs us—"If in chronic disease (psoric) the most Homœopathic remedy (anti-psoric), administered in the smallest and most suitable dose, does not produce any amendment, it is a *sure sign* that the cause which keeps up the disease still exists, and that there is something either in the regimen or condition of the patient that must be first altered before a permanent cure can be effected."

In contemplation of this wonderful achievement of the "immortal, illustrious Hahnemann," we are lost in amazement that "one small head could carry all he knew," and we can only exclaim with Dominie Sampson, "prodigious!"

If I am now asked to account for the success of Homœopathy in the treatment of disease, and the confidence reposed in it by many highly intelligent people, I answer, as to the former, that I deny altogether the truth of the statements put forth by its practitioners. They rest upon no more credible testimony than the similar vaunts and puffs that disfigure the envelopes of the million nostrums with which the world is flooded. So far as my observation has gone, its effects have been eminently disastrous; and I might refer to several cases with which I am familiar; I doubt not most of you could do the same. In the first number of the tenth volume of the *London Lancet* we have a record of the result of Homœopathy in cholera, under the observation of a physician. Every one knows these people claim, to this day,

complete control of this formidable disease. We quote the article—"Dr. Guillot, attached to the Sal Pètriére, annoyed at the little success his treatment of cholera was meeting with, and staggered by the high sounding promises of the adherents of Homœopathy, lately gave one of the latter six beds in the above named establishment, the patients to be treated Homœopathically. Hahnemann's follower immediately set to work and began to exhibit, first, globules of arsenic, then globules of bryonia, and lastly of charcoal. But, alas, for the poor patients! out of seven thus treated *not one* recovered! Of course, the Homœopathic practitioner was obliged to give up; but he cheered himself with the belief that after running through the whole *materia medica* the true treatment of cholera *must* at last be found. Similar trials have been made at the Hôpital St. Louis, with pretty much the same results."

Most cases of ordinary acute disease will recover from the powers of nature alone, and when assisted by judicious restrictions in diet, the chances of recovery are much improved. Hahnemann, while abusing the *vis medicatrix nature* (the best friend he ever had) has strictly and very cunningly enjoined the most rigid abstinence. Some of his followers have carried this rather too far. In the *Lancet* for January, 1850, a case is recorded of a verdict of manslaughter returned by a coroner's jury against one of these empirics, who was clearly shown by the evidence to have starved his own brother to death, by way of curing him of cholera. "Deceased was under his treatment for ten days previous to his death, which took place on the 18th of September. During the whole of this period Mr. Pearce, the accused, refused to allow him to have anything to eat. Deceased continually craved for food, and when she appealed to the brother about it, he said if she gave him food she would kill him, and therefore she was afraid to do so. Deceased was continually crying for food, and complained that he was being starved to death."

This Homœopathic starvation system is an exaggeration, and a very dangerous one of the "medicine expectante" which at one time, under the influence of Broussais' opinions, was so much in vogue in France. Having proved inefficient and frequently pernicious in the hands of the profession, it was soon abandoned. It never obtained to any extent among the more practical physicians of Great Britain or the United States.

With regard to the credit Homœopathy has acquired with

certain intelligent people, I can only attribute it to the causes of which I have spoken so much at length in the former part of this paper, credulity and the love of the marvellous. Nor do I consider that these weaknesses ought to be imputed to them as matters of reproach, but rather regarded as infirmities of our nature. "I have learned," says an eloquent author, "and I must bear about me forever, the memory of the lesson, never again to regard the extremes of credulity as inconsistent with the most scientific attainments, or to suppose that what seems the most absurd and marvellous superstition, is incompatible with the highest education, or to think that the utmost prostration of the mind is inconsistent with the loftiest range of intellectual power."*

Neither great learning, extensive information, nor general intelligence is any security against the wiles of empiricism. The mysteries of life, health and disease, and the great and pressing interests connected with them, will frequently startle minds of inferior stability from their propriety. Such minds are ever open to the tricks of quacks. They are Thomsonians to-day, Chronothermalists to-morrow, and Homœopathists next day, ever learning and never able to come at the truth. There are too many such people in every community, and as their influence upon society is in proportion rather to their social qualities, than the soundness of their judgments, they are very apt to lead astray those who listen to them unless

"Their blood and judgment are so well commingled,
That they are not a pipe for Fortune's finger
To sound what stop she pleases."

Let physicians, then, as a matter of duty, patiently explain the absurdities of this imposture to their friends. A few such instances as I have adduced above, candidly exhibited to any man of common sense, could not fail to convince him of the insult offered to his understanding by any one who should approach him thereafter with a phial of globules in his hand. The empirics of this sect are perfectly aware of this, and never publish such "facts to the people." Let physicians, as guardians of the public health, supply this want, and Homœopathy will soon mingle its remains with those of Mesmerism, Thomsonianism, and the like, among the delusions of the past.

*Seymour's Mornings among the Jesuits.

